

NSC BRIEFING
State Department review completed

27 May 1954

NSA review completed

INDOCHINA

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III. Viet Minh battle corps redeploying faster than French expected.

- A. On 25 May Division 351 approaching Tuyen Quang assembly area. (1)
- B. Bulk of other divisions well east of Dien Bien Phu, ~~heading for~~ ^{HALF WAY TO} bases north and south of delta.
- C. This apparently means early June arrival, rather than French estimate of 20 June.
- D. French still have no clear idea enemy intentions.

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- 2. Consensus of observers is: enemy may decide after return on basis political strategy Geneva, assessment of French strength and morale in delta.

IV. O'Daniel estimates if enemy attacks within next 30 days, French could not hold more than small Haiphong beachhead without substantial and immediate reinforcement.

V. French now trying strengthen delta defenses.

- A. By redeploying other French forces in Indochina:
 - 1. All or most of 15 French battalions in Laos will move.
 - 2. Five from other areas have already moved.
 - 3. Of three now on water, at least one will go to delta.

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B. By plans for further re-enforcement from overseas.

1. Eight battalions (5,000 men) to be sent with minimum delay, according US embassy Paris.
2. Decision on 3 further divisions (30,000 men) awaiting General Ely's return.
3. Paris studying chances of calling October class in July, to release regulars for Indochina.

C. By study of possible reduction in Tonkin perimeter.

1. One reported plan: withdraw to north of Red River-Bamboo Canal.
2. Another plan: hold only Hanoi-Haiphong corridor.

D. Such contraction plans:

1. Mean abandonment of Vietnamese Catholics in south delta.
2. May account for rumors evacuation French dependents in delta.

VI. Wounded French officer has reported on foreign participation at Dien Bien Phu.

A. Said "foreign Communist officers"--Russians, Japanese, unidentified Europeans--served with Viet Minh (may have been renegade Legionnaires, wartime Japanese deserters).

B. Chinese truck drivers delivered supplies direct to battlefield.

C. Chinese troops may have been involved.

(BORDER TRIBESMEN - THO)

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- VII In political field, many reports received of continuing governmental deterioration, plots of revolt, civil war, rioting. A former Vietnamese premier described present situation as a "complete crisis of confidence."
- VIII In Cochinchina, gangster Binh Xuyen group to which Bao Dai delivered police control several weeks ago (in return for over \$1 million) have just about wrecked the security apparatus of Saigon.
- A. Hundreds experienced police resigned in disgust and law enforcement "dropped to nothing."
 - B. Binh Xuyen promised to support cab drivers in old gag of overcharging passengers: US charge fears this may lead to antiwhite rioting.
 - C. [REDACTED] Binh Xuyen now having access to police arsenal, may well get into an armed battle with local Vietnam army units while trying to establish an autonomous position for themselves. Also, may fight warlord Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups.
 - D. Saigon press has indulged in unprecedented anti-US campaign past week, speaking of US "imperialism," Soviet "benevolence." This shows clearly Viet Minh unhampered penetration Saigon press.

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IX In central Vietnam, picture described by one US official
as "precarious and discouraging."

- A. Security, except in southern part, just about non-existent.
- B. It alleged local militia would rather shoot each other than Viet Minh.
- C. Large numbers peasants streaming into capital Hue and many believed Viet Minh agents.

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